

Contents

CEO's Address	2
Supporting and Developing Hillwalking	4
Supporting and Developing Climbing	6
Training and Skills Development	8
Improving Access and Protecting the Mountain Environment	10
Club Development Programme Northern Ireland	12
Get Climbing Initiative	12
Get Ireland Walking Initiative	13

**Working for
and representing
hillwalkers and
climbers**



“ There were many successes for Mountaineering Ireland in 2019 and much progress was made on our Strategic Plan’s goals. Our membership continued to grow, reaching over 14,000, with 191 member clubs.”

Mountaineering Ireland gratefully acknowledges the funding that it receives from Sport Ireland, its Women in Sport programme and the Dormant Accounts Funding, and from Sport Northern Ireland, and from Healthy Ireland for the Get Ireland Walking programme.

Mountaineering Ireland

Annual Review 2019

Last year was an extremely busy and enjoyable one for Mountaineering Ireland, with many successes and many positive developments coming to fruition. As we continue the journey of delivering on our current Strategic Plan’s goals, which are all aimed at supporting our membership of hillwalkers and climbers and increasing our service capacity, we have seen some great progress in that regard. In addition, as we expand our reach to attract new members, 2019 has seen us continue to develop our governance and best practice structures, all supported by the Board of Mountaineering Ireland. We have also made progress in the important areas of child protection and safeguarding, and in improving our capacity to communicate effectively with our members.

One remarkable achievement in 2019 was the formation of a Hillwalking Committee in early March. Chaired by Grainne McLaughlin, they hit the ground running. That also coincided with the appointment of Ruth Whelan to her new role as Hillwalking Development Officer.

Our membership continues to grow and 2019 saw ten new clubs affiliated, bringing the overall membership to 14,020 as of October 31st, which included 191 clubs and 1,770 individual members. The annual increase in membership that has occurred since 2017 has us on track to increase our membership by 25% by 2021, as per the goal in our Strategic Plan.

The 2019 annual programme of activities for our members included an extremely well attended Women With Altitude event. With over ninety participants, it was one of the largest such events that we have organised. The Autumn Gathering, hosted by Kilmacthomas Walking Club in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, was also a huge success. Our annual Club Support Meetings were held in the four provinces, with representatives from more than forty-five clubs in attendance.

Another highlight of the year was the Mountaineering Ireland Lynam Lecture, which was delivered by Sir Chris Bonington (pictured opposite) to a captivated audience of more than four hundred members, making it the first ever Lynam Lecture to be sold out.

In the spring of 2019, Alan and Margaret Tees commenced the work of putting together Mountaineering Ireland’s *Irish Peaks* book, supported by Helen Lawless and Zest Design. This project took all of their time and energy, right through to completion. It is truly a magnificent piece of work and I am pleased to say that it is available to buy now from our website.

The three annual Climbing Meets continue to grow in size. The Fair Head Climbing Meet is one of our biggest events and, in 2019, attracted around

350 people. As always, it was hosted by the wonderful courtesy of the McBride family, who continue to support the development of climbing at these amazing cliffs. The Climbfest in Donegal and the Burren Climbing Meet were also well attended and had about eighty participants each. Rob Hunter took on the role of Head Coach from Terry O’Connor for the Youth Climbing Team.

In 2019, there were also increased pressures and challenges faced by climbing walls, with increasing insurance premiums. Great credit must go to the Climbing Committee and Damien O’Sullivan, Climbing Officer, who have continued to work closely with the sector, providing support and ensuring high standards are maintained through close work with wall owners, insurance companies and the Route Setting Association.

Our Access and Conservation Committee and the Access and Conservation Officer, Helen Lawless, have continued to work diligently to support access and promote responsible use of our upland areas. There was a positive development also, with a new chairperson coming into Comhairle na Tuaithe in June and a new mandate for the body.

In 2019, we focused a lot of energy towards new opportunities in locations like the Luggala estate and building relationships with the new owner, and in promoting the principles of Helping the



Hills in popular locations, where trampling and path erosion are ever more evident, like Slieve Donard, Errigal, Croagh Patrick and Cuilcagh.

An exciting and welcome initiative saw the establishment of an Access and Conservation Network with over one hundred members, allowing them to feed into Mountaineering Ireland's policy development, submissions and specific projects.

In the past year, we have also seen significant work completed by the Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI), supported by the Training Officer, Jane Carney, and by Laura Griffin, the Training and Membership Support Administrator.

Also in 2019, we saw the completion of the MTUKI Climbing Awards Review, the revision of the climbing awards, and the launch of the new Rock Skills Personal Proficiency Scheme, the Indoor Climbing Assistant award and the Rock Climbing Development Instructor qualification.

Almost seventy members enjoyed some wonderful Alpine experiences in the Mont Blanc massif, where the 2019 Summer Meet was located. It was extremely positive to see four Irish Mountain Guides work on the Meet. The Meet focused on having a strong youth attendance, resulting in 44% of the overall numbers attending being youths. 2019 also saw the continued developments of partnerships with Mountains for the Mind, Adventure Smart and the Irish Girl Guides.

Across Northern Ireland, our Club Development Programme, delivered by Kevin Kilroy, the Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, has continued to provide support and direction in the development of both hillwalking and climbing clubs there, with a keen focus on involving young people. Our Get Climbing Programme offered nearly 1,000 climbing and hillwalking opportunities to young people during 2019, all under the watchful supervision of Natasza Berlowska.

During 2019, we continued to monitor progress as set out in our Strategic Plan. We continued to develop and nurture key relationships with our core funders in Sport Ireland, Department of Health, Healthy Ireland and Sport NI. These funding streams are channelled towards helping us to achieve our strategic goals and developing improved collaborations with our partners to ensure we meet our Strategic Plan's objectives. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all our funders.

The year 2019 saw some small changes in our staffing. At the end of December Natasza Berlowska moved on from her

role in the Get Climbing initiative, Ruth Whelan moved into the Hillwalking Development Officer role and Laura Griffin moved into the Training and Membership Support Administrator role. At the end of 2019, Linda Sankey joined the staffing team in the role of Communications and Administration Officer with Get Ireland Walking. I would like to thank Natasza for her contribution to the Get Climbing programme and wish Ruth, Laura, and Linda all the best in their new roles.

During 2019, we also saw some movement in the Board, with Irene Sorohan and Simon Walsh stepping down to focus on work commitments, and Geoff Thomas coming in as the new Chairperson of the Climbing Committee. I would like to thank both Irene and Simon for their support and contributions to Mountaineering Ireland, and I welcome Geoff in his roles as Board member and Chairperson of the Climbing Committee.

I want to pay a special thanks to Jason King for his commitment and dedication to Get Ireland Walking during 2019. He carried the responsibility for the programme nearly singlehandedly during the year. I must also thank Siobhan Quinn, our Administration Officer, for her enormous contribution as the first point of contact in our office, for her support to our clubs and members, and for offering her expertise in supporting my priorities.

I also want to acknowledge the massive contribution made to Mountaineering Ireland by the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, chaired by Imelda Buckley, which all goes on in the background, mostly unnoticed, and the excellent work delivered by IFT Financial Management in providing our accountancy requirements. Our National Children's Officer, Gerry Gorman, also worked away diligently behind the scenes and must be acknowledged for his essential contribution. Thank you all very much.

In conclusion, I would like to record my sincere gratitude to all our steadfast volunteers, our sub-committees and working groups, our dedicated staff team, to our President, Paul Kellagher, and the Chairperson of the Board, Paul Barron, and to all our Directors, who contribute to and together deliver an effort far greater than the sum of its many parts. It is a pleasure to serve and lead you, and thank you all for your continued support.

Murrough McDonagh
Chief Executive Officer



“ The progress made by the newly established Hillwalking Committee and by Mountain Training Board Ireland is striking in a year that was not without its challenges to all aspects of our sport.”



Supporting and Developing Hillwalking

Growing our membership and developing hillwalking

Mountaineering Ireland's new Hillwalking Committee commenced work in 2019 and held four meetings. The last quarter of 2019 also saw the appointment of a Hillwalking Development Officer to solely focus on developing hillwalking and supporting hillwalkers to ensure their needs are met.

A number of projects were commenced by the Committee in 2019, including re-engaging with OSi to improve communications and to work with them on their plans for future maps. We would like to thank all our clubs that have provided feedback to date, which will help improve the quality of mapping for upland areas, with specific information provided for walkers and climbers.

The Irish section of the E8 walking route has been tracked and can be completed in either direction. It incorporates a number of Ireland's own long-distance National Waymarked Trails including: The Wicklow Way starting from Dublin, The South Leinster Way (The Barrow Tow Path), Stage 1, 2, 3 and 4 of The East Munster Way, Stage 1 and 2 of The Blackwater Way (The Avondhu Way and Duhallow Way), The Kerry Way and finally The Beara Way in west Cork.

Ten new clubs were affiliated with Mountaineering Ireland in 2019, bringing the membership up to a total of 14,020, which includes 191 clubs and 1770 individual members as of October 2019.

Strengthening our support for hillwalkers

In 2019, four Club Support Meetings were held around the country, where Mountaineering Ireland staff met with members from over forty-five clubs from Cork, Dublin, Galway, Newry and the surrounding areas. The meetings provided a great opportunity for all club committees to meet Mountaineering Ireland's officers, while also facilitating information sharing between clubs and providing an opportunity for club committees to receive relevant information that will help in the running of their club.

Two Members' Forums were also held last year, one after the AGM at the Spring Gathering and the other during the Autumn Gathering. These forums, where clubs and individual members can put forward items to be discussed, are a key

part of Mountaineering Ireland's democratic process. They are often the catalyst for the review of a policy or for a campaign or action to be launched. Some of the topics that were raised last year concerned developments re Luggala Estate, club administration, the rural indemnity scheme and general insurance queries.

Support was also on hand to ensure that club committees have sufficient information to follow best practice within their clubs, with an emphasis on providing information about new regulations in relation to GDPR and Safeguarding to help ensure protection for both clubs and their members. A toolkit is being developed to support clubs in attracting and retaining members. The first step was initiated by circulating a survey to all clubs to identify their needs and what resources they require to use the toolkit. Funding was also secured to reproduce a Walk Safely leaflet to be published in 2020.



Building greater relationships

Many meetings were held throughout the year with both new and existing members, engaging with potential clubs on a one to one basis and in groups. Mountaineering Ireland staff also attended various events, such as the Killarney Mountain Festival, where both members and potential members visited the stand to learn more about Mountaineering Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland has also continued to host gatherings, providing important opportunities for members and the wider mountaineering community to come together and share their passion for the mountains.

Kilmacthomas Walking Club hosted a very successful Mountaineering Ireland Autumn Gathering based in Dungarvan, Co Waterford, on October 18-20th, 2019. The event opened with a talk from Grace O'Sullivan, a Tramore native and Green Party MEP, who gave an account supported by photos of her interesting life as a Greenpeace activist, an ecologist and environmental activist, to her present role as an EU politician. There were various walks, training sessions and workshops on offer throughout the weekend.

A number of talks were organised for members throughout the year, starting with James Forrest, a freelance adventure and travel writer from Cumbria in England, who toured Dublin, Thurles and Newry at the start of the year, talking about his completion of the Vandeleur-Lynam list of 273 Irish peaks of 600m height or more in just fifty-six days.

December saw a full house of in excess of 400 people attending the Mountaineering Ireland 2019 Lynam Lecture and Award. Sir Chris Bonington gave a very personal account of his life as a mountaineer and it was very fitting that he was presented with the 2019 Lynam Medal for his lifetime's contribution to mountaineering.



Website and social media

The website continues to be a valuable resource for both individual and club members. It offers relevant information, documentation and resources to ensure our members are informed and up to date with Mountaineering Ireland's activities and endeavours.

Mountaineering Ireland's social media presence continued to grow, with increasing activity across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Facebook continued to be a popular means of engaging with members and the public, with over 17,930 followers on Facebook, with some posts reaching up to 184,437 users.

Women in sport

The 2019 Women With Altitude event was based in Killary Adventure Centre in the beautiful landscape of Connemara over the weekend of May 17-19th. Over ninety women from all over the country, with all levels of experience, along with instructors and the organising team, were in attendance. A feedback survey sent out to the participants after the event showed that over 70% of participants had never been to a Women With Altitude event before. Overall, the feedback showed that the event environment was welcoming and inclusive of women of all ages, ability and experience. 90% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they learned new skills and that knowledge was shared, and 85% stated that as a result of this weekend they would try more challenging activities in hillwalking, climbing and/or mountaineering.

Safeguarding

As per the Children First Act 2015, anyone who has access to minors (persons under eighteen years) in a service, coaching or training capacity must undertake a Safeguarding Level 1 Course.

Mountaineering Ireland endeavours to encourage clubs to support youths to enjoy our sport. Safeguarding Level 1 workshops were run as a service to our members in 2019. These workshops are available when the demand is sufficient. All clubs that have youths participating are required to conduct a risk assessment and to display their Safeguarding Statement. Mountaineering Ireland's safeguarding statement and policy can be found at: <https://www.mountaineering.ie/membersandclubs/GardaVettinginClubs>.

Hillwalking Committee

A lot of this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Committee. The members of that committee in 2019 were: Grainne McLaughlin (Chairperson), Ruth Whelan (Secretary), Margaret Collins, Chris Evans, Veronica Kelly, Roy Madden, Russell Mills, Declan Murphy, Louise Nolan and Marian Wallis.

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Ruth Whelan, Mountaineering Ireland's Hillwalking Development Officer, on ruth@mountaineering.ie.



Supporting and Developing Climbing

Climbfest

Organised by the Colmcille Climbers' Club, the 2019 Climbfest climbing meet took place at Malin Head, Co Donegal, over the May bank holiday weekend. Three days of dry but breezy weather provided an exhilarating start to the climbing season.

Fair Head Climbers' Meet

Under the stewardship of Paul Swail, the Fair Head Climbers' Meet has grown into one of the biggest events in the Irish climbing calendar. The 2019 meet was organised by Dal Riada Climbing Club,

supported by Paul Swail. As well as three days of great climbing, the attendees at the meet were treated to two inspiring talks: Freja Shannon spoke on the Friday evening and Dutch climber Jorg Verhoven spoke on the Saturday, to enthusiastic audiences.

Burren Climbing Meet

Jointly organised by the Irish Mountaineering Club and the Dal Riada Climbing Club, the Burren Climbing Meet has grown in popularity. Last year, a good weather forecast drew a larger than expected crowd, who were rewarded with perfect climbing conditions. On the Saturday evening, the meet's guest climber, Angus Kille, gave a hugely entertaining insight into his climbing progression.

Youth Trad Climbing Camps

With the aim of introducing young people to trad climbing, two Youth Trad Climbing Camps were held in July, the first in the Burren, Co Clare, and the second in Glendalough, Co Wicklow. Under the guidance of the camps' main instructors, Angela Carlin and John Healy, the young climbers developed their skills, based on their prior experience and their own personal goals.

UIAA Ice-Climbing World Cup

The 2019 UIAA Ice-Climbing World Cup proved to be the most successful to date for Eimir McSwiggan. Eimir opened her



Irish Bouldering Championship 2019

Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Senior Female	Lucy Mitchell	Victoria Watterson	Trish Fox
Senior Male	Daragh O'Connor	Ciaran Scanlon	Michael O'Neill
Female Youth A	Anna De Souza	Paola Neal-Fagan	Jessica McGarry
Male Youth A	Sean O'Connor	Marcus McDowell	Tommy Myles
Female Youth B	Faith Blaney	Rhyna Conroy	Bonita Thurston
Male Youth B	Luca McDowell	George Lassov	Sean Brown
Female Youth C	Caelin Lenehan	Eabha Hallissey	Eve Buckley
Male Youth C	Sam Monedero-Egan	Zach McClune	Fionn O'Connor

season with an 8th place in South Korea before taking 2nd place in China. In the three European rounds, Eimir was placed 9th in Switzerland, 4th in Italy and 8th in France. Coming into the final round, the chance of a place on the overall podium was high for the County Tyrone climber. In a stunning and nail-biting performance, Eimir took 3rd place in the USA and with it secured an overall world ranking of 3rd.

Youth Climbing Team

Following five years of service, Terry O'Connor stepped down from the role of Youth Climbing Team Coach. In advance of stepping down, Terry worked closely with Rob Hunter to facilitate a smooth transition.

Throughout 2019, Rob worked closely with members of the Youth Climbing Team, providing focused training sessions to help the climbers prepare for competitions as well as supporting the climbers at IFSC competitions.

Youth Climbing Series

With a new format for 2019, the Youth Climbing Series comprised four rounds. The series opened at the Dublin Climbing Centre with a bouldering round that attracted almost 130 competitors. Round two took place at the Foyle Arena, round three at Awesome Walls Cork and round four was held at Awesome Walls Dublin.

The top three climbers in each of the competition categories over the four rounds then competed in the BMC Youth Climbing Series Grand Final, which took place in Sheffield over the weekend of April 27-28th.

On the Saturday, two climbers qualified for the final round of the bouldering competition, Matthew Murray in Male Youth C and Dylan Murray in Male Youth E. On Sunday, six climbers qualified for the final round, Bonita Thurston in Female B,



Caelin Lenehan in Female C, Sean Henchion and Matthew Murray in Male C, Dylan Murray in Male E and Ilmur Jonsdottir in Female E. All six climbers performed very well, with Matthew securing first place overall in his category.

Irish Bouldering Championship

The 2019 Irish Bouldering Championship was hosted by the Dublin Climbing Centre over the weekend of April 6-7th. The results are shown in the table on page 8.

Irish Lead Climbing Championship

The 2019 Irish Lead Climbing Championship took place at Awesome Walls Dublin over the weekend of October 19-20th. The results are shown in the table on this page.

Climbing Wall Seminar

The Climbing Wall Seminar attracted owners, managers and staff from a wide

variety of Irish climbing walls. The seminar focused on issues relating to compliance with relevant safety standards and their significance to the very hot topic of insurance.

With presentations from several leading authorities such as Nate McMullan and Pete Stacey, the attendees were given current and pertinent information on how to best operate their climbing walls.

Climbing Committee

Mountaineering Ireland's work in climbing is guided by the members of the Climbing Committee. The members of the committee in 2019 were:

Simon Walsh (Chairperson - resigned March); Geoff Thomas (Chairperson - from March); Peter Wood; John Healy; Ricky Bell; John Harrison; Angela Carlin (resigned March); Clare Sheridan (resigned March); Kelley Smith (from September); Chloe Condon (from September) and Damien O'Sullivan (Secretary).

Irish Lead Climbing Championship 2019

Results	First Place	Second Place	Third Place
Senior Female	Lucy Mitchell	Chloe Condon	Aisling Brennan
Senior Male	Michael O'Neill	Ciaran Scanlon	Andres Pesquaria
Female Youth A	Paola Neal-Fagan	Ella Brown	
Male Youth A	Marcus McDowell	Dom Donnell	Jude McInerney
Female Youth B	Ella Marshall	Rhyna Conroy	Faith Blaney
Male Youth B	Reuben Aiken	Theo Cassani	Luke Van Impe
Female Youth C	Jessica Claxton-Daniels	Caelin Lenehan	Kasha Ogilvie
Male Youth C	Sean Henchion	Archie Tolland	Zach McClune

FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about Mountaineering Ireland's work in climbing, please contact Damien O'Sullivan, Mountaineering Ireland's Climbing Officer, on damien@mountaineering.ie.



Training and Skills



Mountain Training Board Ireland

In 2019, Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) continued to administer quality assured, internationally recognised mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland, delivered by qualified and experienced trainers, who underwent regular moderation and met CPD requirements.

The Mountaineering Ireland Training Office provides an annual suite of member offerings: national and international meets; multi-discipline skills workshops; club training officer workshops and regional meetings; mentoring opportunities; and award scheme provision.

MTBI are in a unique position, providing and developing both formal and informal training, and, by consulting with stakeholders, reviewing current provision and determining the way forward. We promote self-reliance, and inspire participation and adventure through skills development, thus facilitating enjoyment and safety.

Training for Clubs

Regional Club Training Officer meetings and workshops continue to target in-

club training by bringing clubs together to share ideas, inspire training and promote development within clubs. Thank you to the numerous volunteers involved.

The doubled training grant fund prompted more applications and was promoted at the regional meetings, leading to more training provision and an improved training ethos within clubs. The successful role models that emerged serve to inspire others to follow.



Skills Series and Training Resources

Online resources increased, as did participant engagement with the skills videos, presentations, library and training literature. They can be found on the website, www.mountaineering.ie, in the training downloads section and are beneficial to clubs, individuals, candidates and providers.

Training Providers

An increase in training providers covering the island of Ireland has increased provision and diversity of courses. Providers have been updated and inducted in the new and revised climbing awards. Candidate numbers continue to grow.

Annual Providers Workshops support high training standards and are delivered by the Training Officer. The benefits of gathering providers together are many and allow for: updates; sharing of learnings; development of skills and techniques; discussion of syllabi, teaching and instruction methods; and induction for revised awards. Continued professional development (CPD) events are essential to not only meet association and training board requirements, but also to feed the desire for knowledge and to appeal to the enquiring mind.



“ Mountain Training Board Ireland administers quality assured, internationally recognised mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland.”

Links with Other Organisations

Mountain Training UK and Ireland

The DLOG system, which runs in parallel with the Mountain Training UK and Ireland (MTUKI) Candidate Management System, continued to evolve and increase functionality for our organisation. Communication between the two systems allows for transparency within the home nation's training boards and transferability for candidates of UK and Ireland shared awards.

Mountaineering Ireland and Mountain Training Board Ireland continued as full voting members of Mountain Training UK

and Ireland. The Mountain Training Climbing Awards Review was completed and the Walking Scheme Review commenced. The collaborative work between all the training boards across the UK and Ireland has maintained the consistent momentum essential to develop the existing awards and to add new schemes and awards to the suite of shared awards already on offer.

Sport Ireland Coaching

Mountaineering Ireland has four awards on the Sport Ireland Coaching Adventure Sports Framework and one award on the Sport Ireland Coaching Framework. Work on this continued throughout 2019.

Membership of Mountain Training Board Ireland

Mountain Training Board Ireland (MTBI) administers quality assured, internationally recognised, mountain training awards and schemes on the island of Ireland. The members of MTBI also influence the direction of the work of Mountaineering Ireland's Training Office. The Board's members in 2019 were Dawson Stelfox (Chairperson), Kevin O'Callaghan, Alan Mordaunt, Colin Gibbon, Kate Thompson, Stephen Creber, Lorcan McDonnell, David Batt, Joe McKnight, Kieran O'Hara, Alan Fairweather and John Cousins, and Jane Carney was the Secretary.

Registrations	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Award					
Mountain Leader Award	94	98	76	124	87
Hill & Moorland Leader	2	2	6	20	26
Lowland Leader Award	45	88	77	71	75
Expedition Module	-	-	48	71	75
Rock Climbing Instructor (Single Pitch Award)	69	122	142	116	95
Rock Climbing Development Instructor	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	1
Multi Pitch Award	7	3	2	10	2
Climbing Wall Instructor	28	34	53	77	97
Climbing Wall Development Instructor	6	7	2	36	17
Level 1 Climbing Coach	9	18	2	23	16
Mountain Skills Registration	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	574*
Rock Skills Registration	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	56*
Mountain Skills Participation	1,236	1,187	1,089	1,120	712
Rock Skills Participation	N/a	N/a	N/a	N/a	43
Total	1,496	1,559	1,497	1,668	1,246
Fundamentals	112	73	90	192	

*Not included in the total

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on any aspect of training, please contact Jane Carney, Mountaineering Ireland's Training Officer, on jane@mountaineering.ie.

Improving Access and Protecting the Mountain Environment

The mountain, crag or coastal environment, and access to these places, are fundamental to hillwalking and climbing, and to the quality of the experiences we enjoy. Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation work focuses on two strategic objectives:

- To strive for improved and assured access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers.
- To be a voice for the protection of mountain landscapes.

Improving Access

Mountaineering Ireland actively works to improve and secure reasonable access for responsible hillwalkers and climbers. Mountaineering Ireland acknowledges and appreciates that in the majority of hill and coastal locations the public enjoyment of privately-owned land is available, mainly due to the goodwill and tolerance of the landowners, rather than access being based on any formal arrangement.

Increasing participation in outdoor recreation activities, whilst on many levels a very positive development, is exerting greater pressure on this largely unmanaged situation. Examples include roads blocked by parked cars, reduced privacy for local residents and the visible impact of increased footfall on our fragile upland environment.



Comhairle na Tuaithe

Recreational access in Ireland is within the remit of Comhairle na Tuaithe, the national advisory body on outdoor recreation. In June 2019, the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring TD, appointed Dr Liam Twomey as the independent Chairperson of Comhairle na Tuaithe and presented Comhairle members with a renewed mandate for their work, both developments which Mountaineering Ireland welcomed.

Mountain Access Project

Mountaineering Ireland continued to push the Department of Rural and Community Development for progress on the indemnity arrangement promised to landowners in the two pilot Mountain Access Areas – the MacGillycuddy Reeks and Binn Shléibhe near Clonbur, Co Galway. The Mountain Access project is designed to provide clarity regarding access, based on the voluntary agreement of landowners in an area. With greater support from government, this model of agreed access has the potential to expand to other areas.

Luggala Estate

Autumn 2019 brought news of the sale of Luggala Estate, which includes the mountains of Knocknacloghoge and Luggala, to a private buyer based abroad. Mountaineering Ireland had positive engagement with the new owners and, in the initial months, access continued as previously.

Dog control

In September, Mountaineering Ireland responded to public consultation on dog control in Ireland with a submission highlighting the connection between dog control, outdoor recreation and access for hillwalking and climbing.

Northern Ireland

Following consultation in 2018, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs produced a discussion paper on a review of access legislation, which Mountaineering Ireland and others provided feedback on.

Moor Hill Quarry

Discussions took place with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council about the opportunity to develop Moor Hill

Quarry near Newry as a venue for climbing. The quarry is owned by the council. In December, Mountaineering Ireland submitted a detailed Options Appraisal to the council.

Active at national and local level

Recreational access in Ireland is an evolving situation. Mountaineering Ireland is an active player in discussions, north and south. Mountaineering Ireland's input to national-level discussions on access is strengthened by knowledge of local issues and by solutions being found at local level. Local and national action must continue to support each other as we actively consider options for managing recreational activity and securing access for the decades ahead.

Mountain Environment

Helping the Hills

With increasing footfall on Ireland's mountains, trampling and path erosion are ever more evident. This is a concern for Mountaineering Ireland members, both in terms of damage to the mountain environment and in how erosion detracts from the quality of our recreation experiences. As hillwalkers and climbers, we contribute to this problem and we also need to be part of the solution.

Mountaineering Ireland started the Helping the Hills initiative in 2012 to raise awareness of upland path erosion and to highlight the need for skills and investment in this area (see www.helpingthehills.ie).

During 2019, Mountaineering Ireland made an input to a number of upland path projects. Planning consent was secured in 2019 for habitat restoration and sustainable access paths on both Croagh Patrick and Errigal.

Mountaineering Ireland also liaised with the National Trust team working on the Mournes Path Project and participated in site visits to discuss work proposed for the Glen River path.

Upland management

Ireland's mountains inspire, shape and enrich the recreation experiences enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers. The character of the mountain environment

is being altered all the time by changes in land use, including changes associated with recreation activity. Mountaineering Ireland's vision for the future of Ireland's mountains, agreed by members in March 2017, is that Ireland's mountain landscapes will be valued and protected as environmental, cultural and recreational assets.

Mountaineering Ireland works towards this vision through written submissions, and engagement with other organisations that share a concern for upland areas.

Towards the end of 2019 Mountaineering Ireland contributed to discussions arising from the publication by the Irish Uplands Forum of an island-wide socio-economic profile of Ireland's upland areas. The report calls for an integrated policy approach to address the challenges facing Ireland's uplands, with upland partnership groups, such as the Wicklow Uplands Council, having a central role.

Empowering Members

Respect for the wonderful, but fragile environment enjoyed by hillwalkers and climbers, and being a positive voice for its protection, is one of Mountaineering Ireland's core values. Mountaineering Ireland undertook a range of activities in 2019 to help expand the community of people passionate about Ireland's mountain, crag and coastal environment, and to empower more members to take action to protect these special places.

Environmental awareness

In conjunction with GMIT Mayo, Petersburg OETC and Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geo Enterprise, Mountaineering Ireland hosted a successful Mountain Environment weekend in Clonbur in May, with participation from 14 separate clubs and a number of training providers. Further one-day environmental awareness events were held in the Cahla Mountains, the Wicklow Mountains, on Cuilcagh and in the Comeraghs.



Club Environmental Officers

Mountaineering Ireland urges all its affiliated clubs to appoint an Environmental Officer, who can help to raise awareness within their club and act as a point of contact with Mountaineering Ireland on access and environmental matters. In turn, Mountaineering Ireland provides email updates, advice and training workshops. If your club is not receiving this information, please get in touch.

Access and Conservation Network

In 2019, Mountaineering Ireland formed an Access and Conservation Network to allow members around the island to feed into policy development, submissions and specific projects without the commitment of being on Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. More than one hundred people responded positively to an invitation to join the network and forty-seven people participated in a special forum held at Irish Sport HQ in November to launch the network.

Access and Conservation Committee

All this activity is guided by Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Committee. The members of the committee in 2019 were: Helen Donoghue (Chairperson); Helen Lawless (Secretary); Jack Bergin; Noel Caffrey (from October); Fíona Gallagher (from May); Ursula MacPherson (from May); Mike Maunsell (resigned February); Vincent McAlinden; Aine McGirl (from May); David Pollard (from May) and Orla Prendergast.

Collective effort

Mountaineering Ireland is grateful to the many members who contribute to our Access and Conservation work, as Club Environmental Officers, as Mountaineering Ireland representatives on other organisations, through committee involvement and, importantly, through personal action to protect access and the mountain environment. This collective effort is vital, if Mountaineering Ireland is to deliver on its strategic objectives.



FIND OUT MORE

If you would like to know more about any of the activities mentioned here, please contact Helen Lawless, Mountaineering Ireland's Access and Conservation Officer, on helen@mountaineering.ie.

Club Development Programme Northern Ireland and Get Climbing Initiative



In May 2017, Mountaineering Ireland launched a Club Development Programme for Northern Ireland after securing funding for a four-year period through Sport Northern Ireland's Sporting Clubs initiative. The aim of the programme is to support and develop climbing clubs in Northern Ireland. Kevin Kilroy is employed to deliver this programme as Club Development Officer, based at Tollymore National Outdoor Centre in County Down.

Developments made within third year of the programme

Twelve clubs in Northern Ireland received training support to help their members develop skills across a broad range of areas within mountaineering – from injury prevention workshops and route setting training to traditional rock climbing and hill skills courses. A total of 852 learning opportunities were provided to club members and prospective club members in year three.

Youth development is a key aspect of the programme. Club events, such as the Mourne Youth Trad Fest, hosted by Oisín and Emma Hallissey, and the Mourne Youth Climbing Club, have helped more young people to experience rock climbing in Ireland thanks to the generosity of a strong volunteer team and initiative club committee. Now in its second year, Trad Fest saw twenty young climbers and twenty volunteers take to the crags of the Mourne in small teams, to return in the evening to the Hallissey family home ('basecamp' for the weekend!) to share each others' stories of the day's adventures on the Mourne granite.

Sport Northern Ireland's Tollymore National Outdoor Centre, as well as local businesses and self-employed instructors, provided club members with many services throughout the year, from delivery of NGB training courses, climbing wall maintenance and route setting, as well as instruction and coaching on club trips and training days.

Mountaineering Ireland offers its sincere thanks to everyone who played an active role in this year's club development programme for Northern Ireland.



Get Climbing

This programme continues to engage with young people aged from nine to eighteen years from hard to reach communities and has grown year by year, since it commenced in 2017.

Funded via Sport Ireland through the Dormant Accounts Funding stream, this programme aims to introduce young people from disadvantaged communities to indoor and outdoor climbing. Its intention is that all the participants will achieve an NICAS Level 1 qualification, as well as experiencing taster sessions on the hills.

Last year saw 163 participants benefiting from this sports inclusion programme and, in total, the Get Climbing programme provided 934 climbing opportunities to participants in 2019.

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on the Club Development Programme in Northern Ireland, please contact Kevin Kilroy, Mountaineering Ireland's Youth Development Officer for Northern Ireland, on kevin@getirelandwalking.ie.

For more information on Get Climbing, please contact Ania Bakiewicz, Mountaineering Ireland's Women in Sport Coordinator, on ania@mountaineering.ie.



Get Ireland Walking Initiative



Get Ireland Walking continued to reach communities and partners in 2019 with walking programmes, resources and concepts shared throughout our networks.

Many challenges exist as the initiative grows and expands but, with much will and vision, we strive to succeed in all areas of our work. New programmes and projects were developed, all in partnership, with some real positive outcomes to build upon next year.

With a new team now on board, the possibilities and vision are very much alive. Through innovative thinking and delivery methods, the initiative aims to continue to grow and to place itself as a leader in physical activity promotion.

Programmes

Active Community Walking Programme

Partner: Local Sports Partnership (LSP)

- 73 Active Community Walking Groups
- >800 participants

Schools Walking Project

Partner: ASF, LSP

- >900 ASW Packs circulated to primary and special schools
- >200,000 Packs now distributed to students
- Plans in place with our partner to mobilise schools throughout the year via nudges and active weeks.

Men's Sheds Initiative: Sheds ag Siúl

Partner: IMSA

Provided training and support for four counties (Waterford, Kildare, Limerick and Louth) in 2019. This walking programme provided the physical activity component of the Sheds for Life research. The programme and research continue into 2020.

Woodlands for Health

Partners: MHI, LSP, Coillte, UL

Following on from the success of the programme in Wicklow and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown, Get Ireland Walking coordinated and supported the expansion and delivery in 2019 to Wexford (x 2), Laois, Kerry, Sligo, Roscommon and Limerick, and added Cavan as a new site. Multiple new sites have been identified and sought. National scale-up discussions are now planned for February 2020, through a wider WFH Forum programme.

Waterways for Health

Partners: Waterways Ireland, LSPs in Laois and Kildare

Following the success of the Woodlands for Health Programme and the evident benefits of exercising in nature, a small pilot programme was established, facilitated by Laois and Kildare LSPs, to support clients of Cuan Mhuire Addiction Treatment Centre in Athy, Co Kildare. The partnership with Waterways Ireland and the LSPs once again showed the impact agencies can have when working closely together. The feedback from participants and staff was moving, so much so that the possibility now arises of integrating a walking programme into the treatment plan for all clients as part of their recovery.

Research

An energetic young researcher has been selected through an Employment Based Programme between Get Ireland Walking and Waterford Institute of Technology. The purpose of his research is to create a blueprint for walking promotion in County Cork that reflects all aspects of walking. The post is also supported by the Cork Local Sports Partnership and their team of officers.

To support the research, Get Ireland Walking is now funding a Walking Development Officer, who will provide insight into the delivery, facilitators and barriers around programming for walking in addition to generating stakeholder engagement and buy-in.

To date, forums have taken place with walkers and communities by transport and mobility types. Next steps include developing a system map for Cork early in Qtr 1, 2020. International experts will also advise on the process in Qtr 1, 2020.

Other supports

Get Ireland Walking provides free Walk Leader Insurance for groups and signposting to training opportunities for interested people. Fact sheets and other resources, including hats, 21-day Challenge Cards and Get Active, Go Walking leaflets, are also available, plus phone and online support.

By the end of 2019, 1,908 Registered Walking Groups and Clubs had been established by Get Ireland Walking:

- 566 Community Walking Groups
- 442 GAA clubs
- >800 schools
- >100 Men's Sheds.

FIND OUT MORE

For more information on the Get Ireland Walking Initiative, please contact Jason King, the Get Ireland Walking Programme Manager, on jason@getirelandwalking.ie.